



Feather cloaks and capes were symbols of power and rank in the Polynesian areas of Hawaii, Tahiti, and New Zealand. Red feathers were symbolic of gods and chiefs. Because of their scarcity in Hawaii, yellow feathers also came to be prized, and garments made from them could be worn only by the highest ranking individuals. In the nineteenth century Hawaiians still called their magnificent cloaks and capes, regardless of color, *'ahu'ula* (red-shoulder garments). To create these garments, thousands of tiny feathers were tied to a foundation of net made from the softened bark of *olonā* (*Touchardia latifolia*). Women cleaned, sorted, and grouped the feathers; men tied bundles of about twelve feathers to the netting using *olonā* thread, attaching successive rows of feathers to hide the quills of the row below.

The Academy's cape (3306.1) is made from the yellow and black feathers of the *'o'o* (*Moho nobilis*) and the red feathers of the *'i'iwi* (*Vestiaria coccinea*). A large crescent with a double concave curve on the upper edge, which forms a point in the center, dominates the yellow background of this cape. The neck and front edges are decorated with short bars in alternating black, yellow, and red. Two red triangles act as half motifs on either side; when the cape is tied in the front, the designs are brought together to form crescents. Two red hearts below the black crescent are not traditional design motifs, and they appear on no other Hawaiian garment. The hearts clearly date the piece to the post-European contact period and may have been inspired by playing cards used by sailors and other voyagers who came to Hawaii in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The owl feather cape (4994.1) is the only one of its kind in existence. The short-eared owl (*Asia flammeus*) lived throughout the islands from sea level to 8,000 feet and above. Important beings in Hawaiian mythology, owls were worshiped as family protectors (*'aumakua*). The net foundation of the owl cape is made of two-ply *olonā* fiber. Brown feathers accented with white form a band at the neck and in the center of the cape. Carefully arranged, variegated bands of dark brown, light brown, and white feathers make up the rest of the cape (the garment may have been trimmed). The names of six Hawaiian priests (*kahuna*) have been associated with this cape; the earliest, High Priest Holae, reportedly lived before the time of Kamehameha the Great.

RAD

CAPE ('ahu'ula)

American, Hawaii, late 18th–early 19th century

Feathers tied on netting

16¼ (neck to edge) × 31 in. (41.3 × 78.7 cm.)

Gift of Mrs. Andrew I. McKee, 1964 (3306.1)

CAPE ('ahu'ula)

American, Hawaii, 18th century

Owl feathers tied on netting

15 (neck to edge) × 36 in. (38.1 × 91.4 cm.)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred J. Ostheimer, 1981 (4994.1)



MAKER:

(Yellow and black 'O'o; Red 'I'iwi on of netting

DESCRIPTION:

FEATHER CAPE

Haalelea feather cape of Iiwi red feathers, black Mamu feathers (Ko'o) and yellow E'e, with heart design. Has olona backing. Main body of cape of yellow feathers; two hearts, one on either side of back, near bottom, in red. Across back, in black feathers, a wing-like design spreading from center and curving to within six inches of either side of cape. Two ends of wings decorate each side edge of cape. A lei-like band of

PERIOD Pre-Cook (Before 1778)

alternating red, yellow & black feathers is around neck. Backing and cord to tie cape of ecru color.

SIGNATURE OR MARK:

MEASUREMENTS: H. mid-center back is 16 1/4"; along either side, 10".

GIFT OF: Mrs. Andrew I. McKee, Greatest width, 31"

New London, Connecticut BOUGHT FROM: Around base, 68 1/2"

LOCATION: 1979-1000-101-101-101



DATE: Dec
PRICE:
Valu
Moody, Ju

COUNTRY: Hawaii OBJECT: Feather Cape. Pre

p. 2 / 3306

Hawaii Feather Cape. 3306
COUNTRY OBJECT NO

LABEL: HISTORY: (COLL.) Cape belonged to donor's Grandmother, Mrs. Elizabeth Coney Renj and had been on long Loan to the HAA. March, 1941- No.11,398. Earlier, cape belonged to Hon. Levi Haalelea & was worn by him when on a m tp Europe.

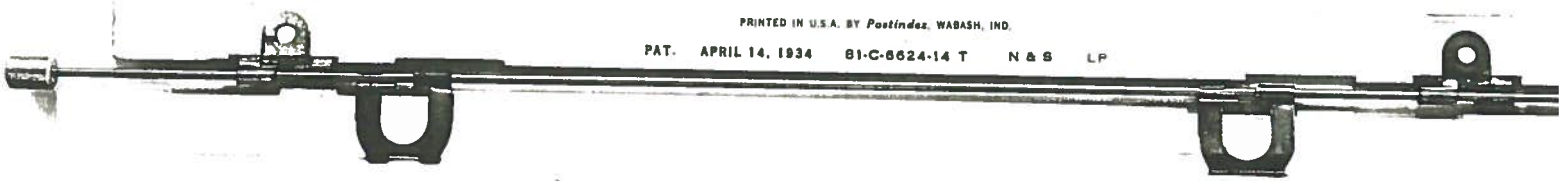
CONDITION: Some feathers missing, but on the whole, good.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

PUBLISHED: No. 80, HAWAIIAN FEATHER WORK by William T. Brigham, Bishop Museum Press, 189 APOLLO, FEB. 1979, P. 53

OPINIONS:

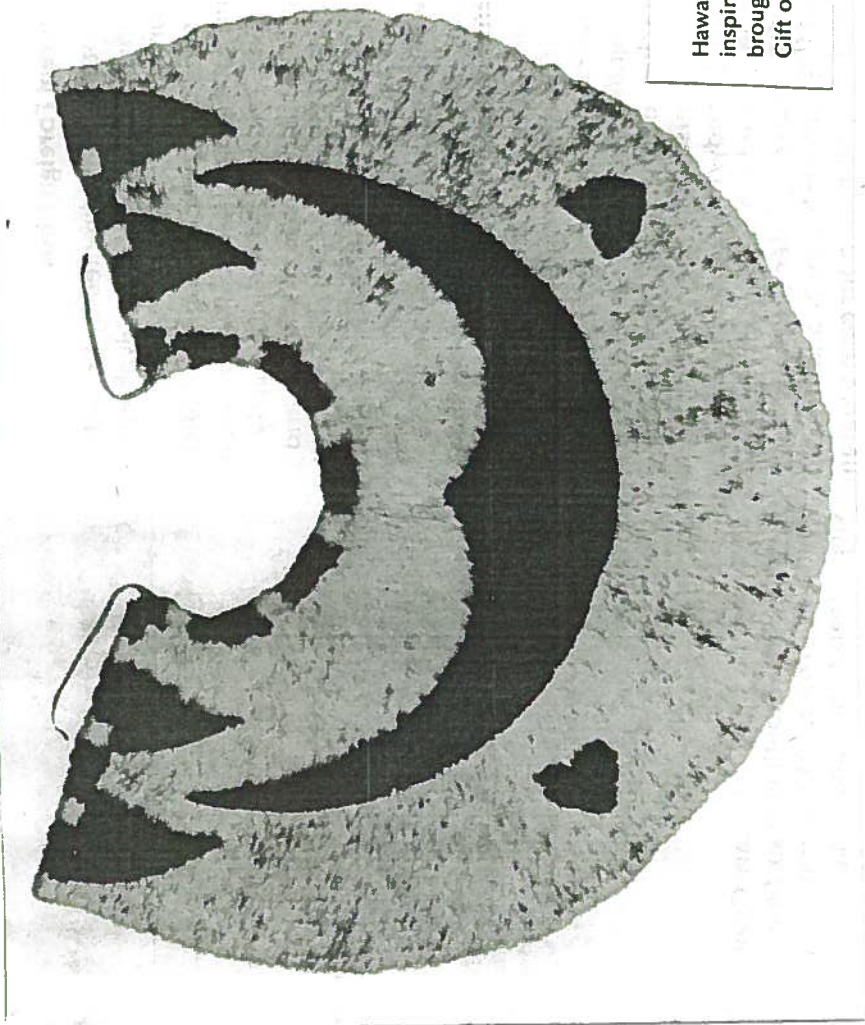
REMARKS: P. 78 Brigham: "Cape is remarkable as the only piece of feather work from Hawa hands that bears any design similar to the hearts shown."



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MAKER: FEATHER LEI HULU X
DESCRIPTION: 'Ō'o (yellow feathers (olona-fiber cord?))
Lei of E'e (Ōo bird) feathers. Has been remade recently

3306.1



Hawaiian feather cape with hearts, a shape inspired possibly by early playing cards brought by Westerners, on view in Gallery 25 Gift of Mrs. Andrew I. McKee, 1964 (3306.1)